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Letter dated 6 September 2012 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), I have the honour to transmit the attached letter, dated 21 August 2012, from the Deputy Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Mr. Alexander Vershbow, transmitting the report on the international security presence in Kosovo, covering the period from 1 April to 30 June 2012 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and the annex thereto to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

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Annex

In accordance with paragraph 20 of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), I attach herewith a report on the operations of the Kosovo Force covering the period from 1 April to 30 June 2012 (see enclosure).

I would appreciate your making this report available to the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Alexander **Vershbow**

Enclosure

Report to the United Nations on the operations of the Kosovo Force

Introduction

1. The present report on the Kosovo Force (KFOR) is provided in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and covers the period from 1 April to 30 June 2012.

2. As at 30 June 2012, the total number of KFOR troops in theatre was approximately 5,500. This included the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Operational Reserve Force Battalion still deployed in the northern part of Kosovo.

Security situation and operations

3. The overall security situation in theatre remained calm, but the northern part of Kosovo was tense. During the reporting period, KFOR continued to contribute to both the provision of a safe and secure environment and the improvement of freedom of movement in Kosovo north of the Ibar River. KFOR continued to use situational awareness to deploy manoeuvre forces and reserves rapidly to deter violence and manage crisis situations. While joint logistic convoys of KFOR and the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) driving towards boundary crossing points 1 and 31 have generally been successful, EULEX convoys continue to be sporadically blocked in the northern part of Kosovo.

4. From 4 April 2012, a number of small-scale inter-ethnic incidents occurred across Kosovo that contributed to an increase in tension among the local population. Media alleged that there had been an ethnic motivation for the 8 April 2012 killing of a Kosovo Albanian citizen of North Mitrovica, in an ethnically mixed neighbourhood and traditional flashpoint of inter-ethnic violence. In order to prevent a further escalation of tension, both local Kosovo authorities and Kosovo Serb representatives in Mitrovica requested KFOR support. This led to the deployment of additional forces[1] to North Mitrovica.

5. The situation along the Administrative Boundary Line remains calm, with minor incidents being addressed at the regular meetings of the Joint Implementation Commission.

6. On 6 and 20 May 2012, Serbian parliamentary and presidential elections were conducted in Kosovo under the supervision of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). KFOR increased its deterrent presence in areas where the potential for clashes was high, and postured its forces to pre-empt or respond to potential incidents throughout Kosovo. In addition, KFOR patrolled in the vicinity of sensitive areas to reassure the population and potentially prevent actions on the part of individuals, groups or organizations opposed to the elections, thus decreasing the risk of inter-ethnic clashes. No significant incidents were reported during the conduct of the elections. The close cooperation among OSCE, EULEX, Kosovo authorities and KFOR proved to be very effective in preventing major incidents and reducing the risk of violence.

[1] One KFOR tactical manoeuvre company in addition to the KFOR Multinational Specialized Unit.

7. In order to re-establish freedom of movement on the main supply road "BuLL",[2] KFOR took action to remove the permanent roadblock in Rudare on 1 June 2012. During this one-day operation, KFOR personnel and vehicles were engaged on several occasions by locals armed with stones and firearms. KFOR responded with the deployment of CS gas (tear gas) and anti-riot assets. Three KFOR soldiers were wounded by gunshots. On 16 June 2012, at the request of EULEX, KFOR conducted an operation to close the unauthorized boundary crossing points near DOG 31 (Brnjak), obliging Kosovo Serbs travelling between the northern part of Kosovo and central Serbia to use the authorized boundary crossing point of DOG 31. Kosovo Serbs protested in a non-violent manner, and the operation was concluded without incident.

8. As at 1 June 2012, new regulations regarding vehicle licence plates in Kosovo were being implemented as part of a Belgrade-Pristina agreement on freedom of movement. South of the Ibar River, the Kosovo Police continue to confiscate the old Serbian-issued licence plates. In the northern part of Kosovo, vehicles with old licence plates are currently allowed to cross; however, EULEX is informing drivers using gates 1 and 31 about the new requirement that vehicles display Kosovo-registered plates.

9. This year's Serb celebrations of the anniversary of the battle of Kosovo Polje (1389) on Saint Vitus Day (Vidovdan Day) were larger than in recent years. The annual two-week Vidovdan march commenced on 14 June 2012 at the Saint Sava Church in Belgrade and culminated on 28 June 2012 with a peaceful ceremony at the Gazimestan Monument in Kosovo. Approximately 3,000 Serbs attended the Gazimestan ceremony. There are conflicting reports concerning two incidents that occurred in Merdare and in the vicinity of the Victory Hotel in Pristina, although exact details are difficult to determine, as KFOR forces were not present on the ground. Throughout the commemoration period, KFOR maintained a deterrent presence in areas where the potential for clashes was high, and postured its forces to pre-empt or respond to potential incidents.

10. The transfer of responsibility for the security of the Dević Monastery from KFOR to the Kosovo Police was successfully completed on 1 June 2012. The Dević Monastery was the seventh property with designated special status to have completed the unfixing process since March 2010. The two remaining sites to be handed over to the Kosovo Police are the Dečani Monastery and the Peć Patriarchate.

Summary

11. During the reporting period, KFOR, in coordination with EULEX, Kosovo authorities and the Kosovo Police, continued to contribute to maintaining a secure environment and to ensuring freedom of movement in Kosovo. The situation in the northern part of Kosovo remained volatile, and several temporary roadblocks continued to hamper the freedom of movement of the local population, as well as EULEX logistic convoys. The May 2012 Serbian presidential and parliamentary elections were conducted under the supervision of OSCE without major incident. The close cooperation among OSCE, EULEX, the Kosovo Police and KFOR (in its third responder capacity) proved to be highly effective. KFOR continues to closely monitor the security situation on the ground and to maintain its deterrent posture to react quickly and decisively, as required.

[2] Main supply road connection between Mitrovica, Leposavić and gate 1.